

Every Child Learning Every Day



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An early childhood newsletter from the State Department of Education

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READY TO LEARN

Share a kiss with 'Little Bear'

Idaho teachers have shared some of their favorite books and activities for children as part of Superintendent of Public Instruction Marilyn Howard's "Dinner and a Book" initiative.

This month's suggestion was submitted by Cindy Prall, a second-grade teacher at Kamiah Elementary School, Kamiah.

Book: "A Kiss for Little Bear," by Else Homelund Minarik

Story synopsis: Little Bear draws a picture for his grandmother and asks his friend to deliver it to her. Grandmother is pleased and sends a kiss back for Little Bear. Delivery of the kiss leads to lots of activity, and even a wedding!

Activity suggestions:

1. Draw a picture that makes you happy.
2. Share your picture with someone.
3. Share a stuffed bear with someone if you have one.
4. Make up your own bear story.
5. Draw pictures with someone.

Related books/topics: "It's a Bear!" and "My Friend Bear," both by Jez Alborough.

To learn more about Superintendent of Public Instruction Marilyn Howard's Dinner and Book, visit: www.sde.state.id.us/DinnerandaBook/.



Tuned in? Trying tuning out TV

Dear Reader:

Do you know any of these characters: Ojo, Stanley, Cassie, Elmo, Blue, or Bob the Builder?

Chances are if you are the parent of a preschooler and you own a television, your family is familiar with some of these characters.

Today there are many wonderful children's programs that are both entertaining and educational. Although television can be a powerful learning tool, studies also show that there can be harmful effects too, from keeping children from exercise, to increasing exposure to violence.

Keeping television viewing in balance for children can be a challenge. The American Association of Pediatrics offers some great tips for parents:

Set limits. Know how much TV your child watches, and don't hesitate to reduce this time. AAP



Dr. Marilyn Howard
Superintendent of Public Instruction

recommends that parents limit their children's viewing to 1 or 2 hours a day.

Minimize the influence of TV. Make it a practice to

keep the TV off during meal-times. Avoid having TV sets in individual bedrooms since this tends to physically isolate family members.

Plan viewing in advance.

Approach TV as you would a movie. Use a TV guide or newspaper to decide which shows to watch.

Don't use TV to reward or punish your child. Practices like this make TV seem even more important to children.

Watch with your child.

Help children interpret what they see on TV by watching along with them.

Provide alternatives. Encourage both indoor and outdoor activities. Play board games or take a nature walk as a family.

Marilyn Howard

READY TO LEARN

Asking questions helps build understanding

One of the most important literacy activities you can do with your child is to share a book every day. Children's books tend to fall into one of two broad categories – *expository* text, which tells information, and *narrative* text, which tells a story. The ultimate goal of reading is comprehension or understanding what was read. Adults can help young children gain comprehension by teaching something educators refer to as *story grammar*.

Narrative text is usually a good place to start. Research indicates that practice with narrative text is particularly effective with young children. One reading researcher said comprehension instruction should start with narrative text because "It most closely reflects the every day life of a child – each day has a beginning, middle and end." A great activity that reinforces comprehension is to simply ask children to tell you the events of the story. Asking questions



such as, "What happened first, what happened next, and what finally happened" help children understand two

of the basic elements of story grammar -- *sequence* and *plot*.

You may also want to introduce more complicated story grammar such as *setting* and *characters*. Young children can be helped to master those concepts with questioning. Consider asking questions that relate to the setting such as "Where do you think the story takes place; why do you think so?" Ask children to name the characters in the book, help them identify the main character.

The goal is to make them independent readers so that one day when the pictures disappear they can create their own images of characters, locations and events.

READING STANDARDS

Each month, the Early Childhood Newsletter focuses on a preschool reading standard.

This month's standard is "Read to locate information from a variety of traditional, technical, and electronic materials for critical analysis and evaluation. What does this mean for preschool children?"

It's simple; three and four year old children will begin to know how a story is put together and to understand the meaning of a story.

Some knowledge and skills in this standard include:

*Looking at and naming pictures that go with a story;

*Trying to guess what will happen next in a story, remembering what came first in a familiar story;

*Telling stories from family outings or experiences at school, from dreams and other imaginative play.

* Asking children to answer questions about a story during the reading experience.



RESOURCES

Free online parenting classes

Parents Encouraging Parents (PEP) offers free online classes for parents.

Participants can listen to lectures, ask questions, and participate in the discussion.

Information is available on www.parentin-gonline.org

Here are some answers to frequently asked questions from the PEP website:

How do the online classes work? After registering for a class, PEP sends confirmation of the class, date and time. Prior to the class PEP will e-mail directions to their online classroom, the participants username and a password, along with an outline of the class.

What technology is required? Participants need a computer with speakers that work with Windows 95/98/NT/2000. Participants will need to do a onetime download of a 1mb (megabyte) file.

Classes in January and February (all times PST) for parents of young children include:

"Raising Happy Families - Unit 1 The Foundation," Jan. 21, 6 to 7:30 p.m.

"Keeping Cool: When Your Kids Push Your Buttons" Jan. 23, 6 to 7:30 p.m.

"Raising Happy Children - Unit 2 Preventing Discipline," Jan. 28, 6 to 7:30 p.m.

"Raising Happy Children - Unit 3 More About Discipline," Feb. 4, 6 to 7:30 p.m.

"Raising Happy Families - Unit 1 The Foundation," Feb. 6, 10 to 11:30 a.m.

"Raising Happy Children - Unit 4 Preparation for the Teen Years," Feb. 11, 6 to 7:30 p.m.

"The Terrible Two's (And 3's and 4's) Part 1," Feb. 13, 10 to 11:30 a.m.

"Your Child's Negative Feelings, How to Handle Them," Feb. 18, 6 to 7:30 p.m.

"The Terrible Two's (And 3's and 4's) Part 2," Feb. 20, 10 to 11:30 a.m.

"Anger and Acting Out, How to Help Children Work Through Their Anger," Feb. 25, 6 to 7:30 p.m.

"Keeping Cool: When Your Kids Push Your Buttons" Feb. 27, 10 to 11:30 a.m.



The New Year is a great time to review progress and renew commitment to goals. Healthy eating is important to the well-being of everyone, especially children.

Healthy eating helps build young bodies and minds.

These tips are from "Nibbles for Health," a nutrition newsletter for parents of young children produced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service.

This advice is meant for any-

one age 2 and older:

Aim for fitness -- Aim for a healthy weight and be physically active each day

Build a healthy base -- Use the Food Pyramid Guide when making food choices and choose a variety of grains, fruits and vegetables daily.

Choose sensibly -- Select beverages and foods to lower your intake of sugars and salt.

The "Dietary Guidelines for Americans" can be your family's guide to smart eating and active living. For more information about the guidelines, visit this website: www.cnpp.usda.gov.

One step toward healthier eating in the New Year is

choosing nutritious snacks. Below are ideas for the whole family:

Quick snacks:

- Whole fruit, sliced into finger foods

- Berries
- Raw, cut-up veggies
- Graham crackers
- String cheese

Easy-to-make snacks:

- Milk shake-ups: Pour milk, juice and ice in a covered container. Shake.

- Fruit juice pops: Freeze fruit juice in small paper cups or ice cube trays.

- Cinnamon toast: Toast whole wheat bread. Spread a little margarine or butter on top. Sprinkle with cinnamon sugar.

NUTRITION

Make healthy eating a family goal

READY TO LEARN

Identifying shapes builds geometry skills

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics offers simple tips to help parents help children understand math. **This month's skill — geometry and spatial sense.** Geometry is the area of mathematics that involves shape, size, space, position, direction, and movement, and describes and classifies the physical world. Young children can learn about angles, shapes, and solids by looking at the physical world.

What adults can do: Help children learn to identify different angles, shapes, and three-dimensional figures. Ask them to identify and de-



scribe different shapes, to draw them in the air with their finger, to trace over them with their fingers, and to draw them on paper.

Children learn geometry best through hands-on experiences. Things they can touch and manipulate are particularly helpful, like blocks, boxes or containers, shape sorters, and puzzles. Even cutting the sandwiches they eat into different shapes and letting them fit them together or rearrange them helps children learn about geometry.

Geometry and spatial sense help children with directions and finding their way around.

As children get older, they play games to find "hidden" triangles, squares, or rectangles that are turned in different ways or have odd shapes.

ACTIVITIES

Use direction words in games, travel

Preschoolers develop ideas of direction gradually through experience. Try some of the following activities to introduce terms of direction to 4-5 year olds:

Use and emphasize words left and right in connection with real situations. Play circle games such as "The Hokey Pokey." To help the child easily identify left or right, you can put a felt marker dot, or a bracelet or string, on one of their hands.

When traveling, use directional terms. "We'll turn right here." Shawndra's house is three blocks from us, so we have to look for the gas station. That is where we turn left."

To help a child understand

ideas like north, south, east, and west, point out directions in their environment for example your kitchen may always be sunny in the mornings because it faces east and that is where the sun comes up. Or, you might sit on the stoop to catch the afternoon sun because the sun sets in the west.

Help increase children's vocabulary by using pictures from books and magazines so they can associate words with visual images. A picture of a desert can start a conversation about the features of a desert -- not much water, not many green trees.

Talk with children to help them find more detailed words to describe different natural and cultural features.

When you are going outside,

look back at the house and ask your children to point to where they live.

Can they find their room? When walking across the street, look back and ask again if they can point to their home.

On a walk around the neighborhood point out other signs that indicate location. Identify street signs and numbers on apartments and homes.

Ask children how a friend would find their home if they didn't have a number or street name.

December's issue of "Every Child Learning Every Day" featured activities for 2-3 year olds from the U.S. Department of Education publication "Early Childhood: Where Learning Begins Geography."